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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 002453

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SUBJECT: Pilot WFP Feeding Program in Former Commercial Farming Areas

REF: Harare 02241

Summary:

1. On December 18 in a meeting for donor representatives, the World Food Programme (WFP) presented details of its proposed pilot program for extending general food distribution into newly resettled (i.e., former commercial farming) areas. This meeting followed the delivery of letters from the European Union and United Kingdom confirming their support of the WFP pilot. The procedures that WFP presented in the meeting outlined processes for beneficiary selection, food distribution and monitoring that are similar to those currently followed in the communal areas, but involve additional monitoring mechanisms to address issues of potential politicization and transparency. WFP's presentation credibly addressed donor concerns about the feasibility of following these processes and demonstrated significant forethought regarding how the plan could be implemented in the special context of the newly resettled areas. On the basis of this presentation, post concludes that the pilot program appears viable and will inform WFP that we do not object to moving forward on a pilot basis, as was already agreed by the EU. Post will explicitly remind WFP that it is not authorized to expand the pilot feeding program beyond the initial two districts without a full evaluation and concurrence from major donors. End Summary.

Donor approval of the pilot:

2. In a letter to the WFP on December 15, the European Union confirmed its support for WFP's proposed pilot program in two districts in the former commercial farming areas. Post has forwarded this letter to Washington. In a related letter from the United Kingdom to the EU, the British High Commissioner emphasized that the approval of the pilot "does not imply agreement to subsequently roll out the programme more widely without a detailed review; nor does it imply availability of additional funding."

3. As described in reftel, the United States had a number of concerns about the feasibility of successfully implementing free food distribution in the contentious environment of these resettled areas. Based on WFP's efforts to address these concerns, as discussed below, post intends to convey its approval of the program in two initial districts on a pilot basis only.

Details of the pilot and US concerns:

4. Following the approval of the pilot by the European Union, WFP invited donor representatives to a presentation to discuss the details of the pilot. The USAID/Zimbabwe Mission Director and the Zimbabwe Food For Peace Officer attended.

5. In the presentation, WFP staff and partners who will implement the pilot (Save the Children/UK and CARE, International) described details regarding: access to the former commercial farming areas; beneficiary selection and registration; verification of the vulnerability of registered beneficiaries and lack of vulnerability of non-beneficiaries; food distribution management; and monitoring. The program's design is substantially similar to the procedures used by NGOs in the communal areas, with special care to sensitize and

inform all concerned government officials of the procedures, and intensified public information, verification of registrations, and monitoring.

16. The presentation and ensuing discussion addressed the major practical and policy issues that have been of concern to the US: 1) the potential for success using current community-based methods for beneficiary selection and food distribution in the commercial farming areas, where there are no traditional communities and where ZANU-PF party structures are the primary representatives of local authority, and 2) the limited access granted to the international community when unimpeded access is needed to assess the extent and degree of vulnerability and to monitor food aid operations.

Compensating for lack of communities:

17. To compensate for the lack of community networks, WFP and the NGO Implementing Partner (IP) staff will announce public meetings and display posters in numerous public arenas (e.g., schools, markets, shops, and drinking establishments), in all population clusters (i.e., both farmers' villages and farm workers' compounds) to be covered from a distribution point. The announcements will emphasize the importance of attendance by a representative from every household.

18. The entire process of beneficiary selection, registration and distribution will be conducted in these public arenas and will be closely observed by staff of the IPs and WFP. All selection criteria will be based on economic or inherent vulnerabilities. Only households identified as objectively lacking means for self-support (low/no income; low/no crop harvest; few/no livestock) will be eligible. Among this broad group of eligible households, those with inherent vulnerabilities (e.g., the lack of able-bodied family members; support of a large number of dependents, particularly the chronically ill, disabled, or orphans; or the lack of land or income) will be prioritized. WFP and the IPs explained that they will not explicitly query potential beneficiaries regarding occupational status (i.e., resettled farmer versus farm work), to avoid any appearance of politicization. They will, however, exclude from eligibility those conducting business or earning regular salaries, e.g., business employees, teachers and other public servants. The implementing NGOs estimate that a substantial majority of qualifying beneficiaries (approximately 80%) will be former commercial farm workers.

19. In order to ensure that intimidation and politicization do not result in the exclusion of those who are vulnerable, WFP will double its efforts at household verification. Under the food distribution program in communal areas, the IPs conduct verification on 10% of the registered households. For this pilot exercise, the IPs will examine a minimum of 20% of the registered households to confirm eligibility and vulnerability prior to any distribution of food. Verification of additional households will continue each month after the first distribution, such that 100% of registered households should be verified within a 5-month period.

10. Before each food distribution, the list of beneficiaries will be read publicly, and those attending the reading will have the opportunity to affirm their agreement or to raise any objections to the list or to any name included or excluded from the list.

11. The food distribution process will be managed and monitored by teams selected by the communities in a public forum overseen by the IP. These teams will be assembled to fairly represent the various vulnerable segments of the community (with significant representation of former farm workers), and to not include individuals in any position of influence who could be in conflict with the program's impartiality.

12. Throughout every food distribution, IP and WFP staff will be present to verify that the process is correctly managed and will make themselves available to receive feedback from any member of the community. WFP emphasized that it has arranged for multiple channels of communication (e.g., through its own monitors, IP monitors and help desks consisting of beneficiaries) for any potentially aggrieved individuals to raise questions in confidence about the registration, verification and/or distribution processes. If any problems or concerns arise with beneficiary selection or registration, WFP assured the donors that it would stop any distributions and recreate the lists from scratch.

¶13. After each food distribution, a random sample of both registered and unregistered households will be canvassed during Post Distribution Monitoring. This exercise will verify that food actually remains with the intended beneficiaries, that recipients meet the eligibility criteria and that recipients are indeed more vulnerable than the non-recipients canvassed.

¶14. Additions and removals of names from beneficiary lists will be made only by the IPs after careful investigation of the circumstances of the households. However, any resident of the distribution area may at any time question the inclusion or omission of a household from the list through numerous formal and informal channels. Save the Children/UK will organize a Children's Feedback Committee in its pilot area to increase opportunities for children's voices to be heard.

Access by the international community:

¶15. WFP stated explicitly that unimpeded access to the pilot areas to disseminate information, verify beneficiary eligibility, monitor distributions, and conduct post-distribution monitoring is a necessary condition to a successful pilot program. WFP explained that before entering a community, it will ensure that it has assurances of unimpeded access from national, provincial and district government structures. WFP insisted, however, that if any of these activities were to be impeded, it would immediately suspend food distribution until the issues were satisfactorily resolved.

¶16. As a next step to discuss issues of access, the IPs and WFP will present their plan at the Provincial, District and Ward levels. Using the GOZ/WFP Memorandum of Understanding (which includes a flowchart of the registration, distribution and monitoring processes and places the IPs in charge of the process), WFP will explain the use of village assemblies to select beneficiaries solely on the basis of vulnerability. WFP will seek written acknowledgement of agreement to the process at the Provincial level.

¶17. WFP stated that the local political structures of the Zanu-PF party established at the time of the farm invasions (the "Committees of 7"), will have no role in the pilot activities.

¶18. WFP invited donors to send 1-2 national staff as observers to the pilot activities. USAID/Zimbabwe is arranging to send its FSN food monitor to observe the pilot at all stages.

Conclusion

¶19. WFP's plans for the pilot feeding program in former commercial farming areas demonstrates careful consideration of the difficult circumstances in these areas and puts in place a number of additional mechanisms to monitor the program carefully. Consistent with the approvals WFP has already received from the EU and UK, post will inform WFP that the USG does not object to moving forward with the feeding program on a pilot basis. Post will explicitly remind WFP that it is not authorized to expand the pilot program beyond the initial two districts without a full evaluation and concurrence from the major donors. USAID/Zimbabwe will arrange for its Food for Peace Field Monitor to observe the pilot program and will keep Washington informed of developments.

SULLIVAN